

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 04068 162143Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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TAGS: PFOR VE

SUBJ: REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS

REF: STATE 086289

1. PRESIDENT FORD'S FOREIGN POLICY ADDRESS TO CONGRESS APRIL 10 WAS THE LEAD STORY IN ALL CARACAS PAPERS MORNING OF APRIL 11. LOCAL PAPERS SEPARATED THE STORY INTO VIETNAM COMPONENT AND THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST TO CONGRESS FOR ELIMINATION OF THE ANTI-OPEC FEATURE OF THE TRA AS IT APPLIES TO VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR, WHICH IS OF GREAT LOCAL INTEREST. LEADING DAILIES EL NACIONAL AND EL UNIVERSAL GAVE SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE TRA REQUEST.

2. PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS PUBLISHED IN FULL IN 2 PARTS IN EL UNIVERSAL APRIL 13-14 FROM USIS-SUPPLIED TEXT, WHICH WAS LASO SENT TO TOP OFFICIALS OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, MIRAFLORES PALACE AND TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEES IN THE SENATE AND THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, AS WELL AS TO LEADING LOCAL COLUMNISTS AND COMMENTATORS.

3. THERE HAS BEEN AS YET NO OFFICIAL REACTION TO THE SPEECH AS A WHOLE, ALTHOUGH IN A PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 11 FOREIGN MINISTER RAMON ESCOVAR SALOM EXPRESSED PLEASURE OVER THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST FOR ELIMINATION OF THE RESTRICTIONS WHICH THE TRA IMPOSED UPON

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PAGE 02 CARACA 04068 162143Z

GRANTING GENERALIZED PREFERENCES TO VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR.

(ESCOVAR AT THE SAME TIME DENIED THAT LIFTING THESE RESTRICTIONS AGAINST VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR WOULD DISTURB THE UNITY AND SOLIDARITY OF OPEC.) ESCOVAR ALSO EXPRESSED THE HOPE AT THIS PRESS CONFERENCE THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO FIND A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION TO THE GRAVE SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (SEE CARACAS 3955).

4. NO EDITORIAL REACTION TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH HAS YET APPEARED. LOCAL MEDIA CONTINUE TO GIVE SOUTHEAST ASIA SITUATION FAIRLY EXTENSIVE PLAY. THE ONLY COLUMNIST TO COMMENT ON THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS AD DEPUTY AND INTERNATIONALIST LUIS ESTEBAN REY, WHO WROTE IN EL UNIVERSAL APRIL 13 THAT IN HIS SPEECH THE PRESIDENT "THREW A BONE" TO LATIN AMERICA WHILE CONCERNING HIMSELF PRIMARILY WITH INDOCHINA. REY CREDITED THE U.S. WITH CONSIDERABLE SACRIFICES IN VIETNAM, BUT WARNED THAT THE U.S. SHOULD PREPARE FOR THE WORST IN INDOCHINA AND CORRECTLY EVALUATE ITS OBLIGATIONS IN TERMS OF ITS VITAL INTERESTS ELSEWHERE.

5. COMMENT: VENEZUELAN INTEREST IN THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH OBVIOUSLY CENTERED IN HIS REQUEST TO CONGRESS ABOUT AMENDING THE TRA TO BENEFIT VENEZUELA, AND REACTION AS TO THAT FEATURE HAS BEEN QUITE POSITIVE. VENEZUELAN ATTITUDE TO EVENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IS LARGELY PASSIVE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE NET IMPACT HERE OF THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS PROBABLY TO REINFORCE LOCAL AWARENESS OF THE COMPLEXITY OF THE IMMENSE INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE U.S. WE DOUBT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WILL SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER THE ATMOSPHERE AND AGENDA FOR THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. ASECIO

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